Bible study is very important for all believers. It is the very means by which you are equipped for God’s work. It is not just for those called to vocational ministry but for all believers. 2 Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

How does one go about "rightly dividing the word of truth?" Let’s find out as we learn where Bible study begins and how to study the Bible.

**Where Bible Study Begins**

It begins with a preparation and a proper perspective. When we come to God’s Word we must see it as it is — God’s holy, infallible, inerrant, inspired Word. It’s God’s Word!

**How to Study the Bible**

Once you have adequately prepared yourself for study by prayer and confession of sin, you must begin now with the basics.

You Must Read the Bible ("What does the Bible say?")

Jerry Vines said, "An unread Bible is like food uneaten, a love letter never read, a buried sword, a road map unstudied, gold never mined" (A Practical Guide to Sermon Preparation, p.69).

Richard Moulton said, "We have done almost everything that is possible with these Hebrew and Greek writings. We have overlaid them, clause by clause, with exhaustive commentaries; we have translated them, revised the translations, and quarreled over the revisions...There is yet one thing left to do with the Bible: simply read it" (Cited by Vines, p.69).

Now that you have established a priority of reading the Bible, you must now:

**Interpret the Bible** ("What does the Bible Mean?")

The ultimate task in interpretation is to "discover why the author wrote what he wrote."

In doing that you must discover "the original meaning intended by the author" (Han Finzel, Unlocking the Scriptures, p.65).

To help with finding the original meaning intended by the author, you must:

Understand the problems. There are gaps that must be bridged like language, history, culture, and geography.
To help you bridge these gaps you need to be familiar with a few important principles:

1. Remember that context rules
2. Always seek the full counsel of the Word of God
3. Remember that Scripture will never contradict Scripture
4. Do not base your doctrine on an obscure passage of Scripture
5. Interpret Scripture literally
6. Check your conclusions by using reliable commentaries

Now that you are familiar with the principles you need to follow a particular procedure:

1. Ask specific questions (who, what, where, when, why)
   - What? (the key truths or events), Key ideas, Theological terms, Key events, Important words, Figures of speech, Atmosphere.
   - Where? (the geography and location), Places mentioned, Buildings, Cities, Nations, Landmarks.
   - When? (the time factors), Date of authorship, Duration of the action, When in the church age, When in the life of Israel, Past, present, or future?
   - Why? (the purpose of the passage or book)

"The answers to who, what, where, when, and why can be found by looking in these four places, in the order stated: content of the passage/book; context of the passage; comparison; with other Scriptures; consultation with resource books" (Finzel, p.69).

The final step in interpretation is the formulation of a conclusion, based on your research.

2. Summarizing the steps by stating an initial proposal based on the content.

"You cannot adequately do this until you have went through the observation principles." This can be the theme of the passage or it could be a principle that the passage is teaching. Next you need to search the context. What can the surrounding context of the passage add to your understanding of it? The teaching of a single passage must be viewed within the setting of the entire book from which it is lifted. The third step is to seek comparison (cross-reference). The Bible itself sheds light on its own meaning. Cross-reference and using other Bible translations can be helpful. The fourth step is to survey the secondary resources (commentaries, atlases, dictionaries). This is only after you have done the other work yourself. When you use these secondary resources use them discerningly. And the final step is to state your conclusions. When you do this try to state it in one sentence or less with cross-references in accordance to the context. Don’t forget to include any application principles that may come directly from your study.

Now that you have read the Bible and applied the principles of interpretation, you must:

Apply the Bible (This answers the question, "How does it apply to my life?")
Application always follows interpretation. J. Robertson McQuilkin said, "The goal of all Bible study is to apply the truth of Scripture to life. If that application is not made, all the work put into making sure of the author’s intended meaning will have gone for naught. In fact, to know and not do, doubles the offense of disobedience" (Understanding and Applying the Bible, p.255).

Ps.119:34 - "Give me understanding and I shall keep your law; indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart." [James 1:22 (doers not hearers)]

Application must be kept simple, practical, and personal. Ask the right questions: "How does this relate to my life?" Some other questions you can ask are: Is there a principle to apply, Is there a command to obey, Is there an attitude to adjust or Is there a sin to repent of?

Next you want to principlize what you learn. Take the Scripture you are studying and write a brief sentence of what it is teaching. What is James 1:2-12 teaching? "Trials are a part of my Christian experience. I am to count it all joy because of what they are teaching me in my life."

Second, model before others what you learn. Paul was a model to the church. He said in Phil.4:9 - "The things which you have learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you." Just as Paul, we are to equally model righteousness before others. 1 Tim.4:12 says, "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity." 1 Pet.5:3 says, "Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."

Last, teach what you learn to others (Mat.28:19-20). Paul told Timothy in 2 Tim.2:1-2 - You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

CONCLUSION

Read the Bible
Interpret the Bible
Apply the Bible

Remember the goal of all Bible study is to know God and make Him known!

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